

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS/
WICHITA PARK ALLIANCE**

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

Wednesday, January 20, 1999

Park Board Members Present: June Bailey, Lucy Burtnett, Pat Consolver, Bob Martz, M.S. Mitchell, Leon Robinson

Park Alliance Members Present: Paul Attwater, Jim Hand, Marla Howard, Jerry Martin, Debbie O'Brien, Mary Lou Rivers, Fritz Robinson, Barbara Yarnell

Absent: William Sanders (Park Board)

Marla Howard, Wichita Park Alliance (WPA) President, welcomed attendees and thanked members of both boards for attending the meeting. She asked that each attendee introduce themselves and give a brief background of their professional careers, their interest in park and recreation issues, and how they became involved with their respective boards.

Howard gave a brief overview of the WPA's mission and history and explained that the purpose of the joint meeting was to discuss how the WPA could work more effectively with the Park Board (PB) and the Park Department.

Howard commented that the WPA had not been taking on any new projects because they were waiting to see where WPA would best fit into future Park Department plans in conjunction with the results of the on-going park facility study. She referred board members to a hand out that detailed many WPA activities that were designed to assist park programs and projects, which included the following: application and receipt of grant awards; land acquisition; cash contributions and other initiatives such as development of Botanica; support of the Wichita Wild/Kansas Wildlife Exhibit; development and support of the Trees for Neighborhoods program; acquisition of the Premiere Showmobile portable stage; and sponsorship of various River Festival events. She also mentioned that the WPA sponsored a booth at the annual Lawn, Flower and Garden Show and was also assisting the Great Plains Nature Center by acting as trustee for donations to the center. She added that the WPA acted as trustee for a number of groups such as the recreation center Golden Age Clubs, Wichita Wild and various neighborhood groups through the City's Matching Playground Equipment Fund program, investing and managing the various restricted funds and insuring they were disbursed in accordance with terms of the restrictions. There was also mention of the WPA's brief involvement in fund raising for the downtown pocket park and how it was decided to let the Public Art Advisory Board take the lead on that project.

Howard said that one of the goals of the WPA was to actively support the Park Department and Park Board and encourage activities and events in parks. She said the WPA would like to have some dialogue with the Park Department and PB on how the WPA fit into the big picture, what they wanted to see the WPA involved in and projects or areas where the WPA could be most beneficial. It was noted that the WPA was a non-profit corporation and qualified under the provisions of Section 501 © (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Board members were referred to a copy of the WPA's Bylaws. It was further noted that the WPA was apolitical and members preferred not to get involved in political activities.

Mitchell mentioned that security in parks and maintenance of park facilities were two issues that came up on two citizen surveys, one conducted by the facility consultant and on a previous survey conducted several years earlier by the City. He said he felt more general fund monies were needed for capital maintenance and to make park use more convenient and "user friendly". He said he thought the Park Department needed help to obtain additional funding through either a new tax or by establishing some type of dedicated funding. He mentioned that a Park Finance Committee had been formed to study the issue; however, that group had disbanded. He added that the WPA, as a 501 © (3) organization, might be utilized to hold funds donated for special purposes in parks.

Hand said he did not think park funding was a problem unique to Wichita and asked if there was a model City/County that Wichita could go by. Mitchell cited Johnson County's method for dedicated park funding, but added that the tax base was established a long time ago when the county was much smaller. He added that the Johnson County Director of Park and Recreation has come to Wichita and given a presentation and has also offered to work with the Park Department and Park Board. There was considerable discussion concerning Park Department funding and whether it would be better to be funded within or outside the general fund. There was also discussion concerning ways to increase park program/facility utilization; better communication; program marketing; providing incentives to recreation center directors; and ways to increase revenues to cover expenses.

It was the general consensus that the boards should attempt to conduct a joint meeting at least once a quarter in the future to further define the WPA's role in park projects. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.

Marla Howard, President
Wichita Park Alliance

Lucy Burtnett, President
Board of Park Commissioners

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk